

Big Bend and the Border

Viewing the sun set against the Sierra del Carmen mountains is a sublime Big Bend experience, underlined by the irony that the mountains aren't a part of the National Park; in fact, they aren't even located in the United States. In addition to defining the curve that forms the Big Bend, the Rio Grande also serves as the International boundary between the United States and Mexico.

Throughout much of its history the border along the Rio Grande has often been fluid, allowing people of both countries to come and go as needed. However, the border is an artificial boundary imposed on the natural environment, and as such is subject to political and social pressures.

Increased border restrictions following the 2001 terrorist attacks have led to a number of important changes that affect the international boundary in Big Bend. The information below provides a summary of current conditions.

Border Merchants

Mexican Nationals may approach you from across the river to purchase souvenir items (walking sticks, bracelets, crafts, etc.). If you agree to look at/purchase their items and the Mexicans cross the river, they may be arrested for being in the U.S. illegally. They will be held until deported back to Mexico through Presidio (100 miles away). Mexican merchants will be arrested for illegal commercial operations which may result in a fine and/or additional incarceration while awaiting adjudication prior to deportation.

Items purchased will be considered contraband and seized by officers when encountered. Rocks, minerals, archeological items etc. cannot be purchased, imported, or possessed in the national park.

In addition, illegal trade impacts the resources of the park in a number of negative ways, including the creation of social trails, the cutting of cane along the river, erosion of riverbanks and an increased amount of garbage and contaminants along the Rio Grande watershed. Supporting this illegal activity contributes to continued damage of the natural resources along the Rio Grande, and jeopardizes the possibility of reopening these crossings in the future.

While Visiting A Border Park

Big Bend National Park shares the border with Mexico for 110 miles. This is a remote region; however, each year hundreds of people travel north through the area seeking to enter the United States. Please keep the following in mind while visiting Big Bend:



If you see any activity which seems to be suspicious, illegal, or out of place please do not intervene. Report it to a ranger as quickly as possible.



It is possible you could encounter an individual or small group trying to walk through the park with little or no water. Please do not stop, but instead, immediately report such occurrences to a ranger. Lack of water is a life-threatening emergency in the desert.

A visit to Big Bend is a wonderful experience to learn about the park's history and to experience a wide variety of natural history and recreation options. The park's shared border with Mexico is part of our shared landscape and a chance to experience and learn about our neighbors. A few simple steps can help keep the park safe for everyone who is here.



Crossings Remain Closed

As a result of a 2002 US Customs and Border Protection decision, there are NO authorized crossings in Big Bend NP. *Crossing at Boquillas, Santa Elena, or other locations along the Rio Grande is prohibited.* The closest legal ports of entry are at Del Rio and Presidio, Texas.

The U.S. Attorney's Office has indicated that it will prosecute any criminal violations regarding these illegal crossings. If you re-enter the United States at any point within Big Bend National Park, you may be liable for a fine of not more than \$5,000 or imprisonment for up to one year, or both.

Please consult Park Rangers for the latest updates on this situation.

Stranded?

Four things to do if your vehicle breaks down in Big Bend National Park.

1. Park in a safe location, out of the traffic lane and where you are visible to oncoming traffic. Put the hood up and hazard lights on.
2. Have a note ready with your exact location, vehicle description, license plate number, name, number of people with you & your problem. A passing visitor can take this to the nearest ranger station and this will expedite your rescue.
3. Never try to walk for help, on the road or cross-country. Stay with your vehicle. If, however, someone offers you a ride and you choose to leave your vehicle, leave a detailed note on your car explaining where you have gone, time & date, what you believe the problem is, and how to locate you.



A. Pasco

4. Try your cell phone; it may work. Park Dispatch can be reached at 432-477-1188. After hours, 911 is available 24 hrs a day. They will dispatch a ranger to you.

Entrance Fees & Big Bend

Why Do Parks Charge An Entrance Fee?

Much of the funding for Big Bend and other national parks comes from American taxpayers. However, protecting this land and ensuring that you have a safe, enjoyable and educational experience costs more than this tax base provides. Therefore, the U.S. Congress determined that people who use federal lands should pay fees to offset the difference.

Where Does Your Money Go?

Twenty percent of the money collected from entrance and campground fees is redistributed to units of the National Park System that do not charge fees to assist in the upkeep and upgrade of those areas. Eighty percent of the money *stays in Big Bend National Park.*



How Is Your Money Used?

Your entrance and campground fees help Big Bend National Park complete important projects that directly benefit you and other park visitors.

Recent Projects at Big Bend Made Possible By Your Fees:

- Reconstruction of the Rio Grande Village (RGV) nature trail boardwalk
- Improvements to the Persimmon Gap Visitor Center
- Installation of toilet at Hot Springs

Future Projects:

- Rehabilitate the RGV Amphitheater
- Develop a visitor center at Castolon
- Major expansion of the Panther Junction visitor center.

Surf Big Bend

Official NPS Website



Live Web-cam
Daily Weather
River Levels
Campgrounds
Research

Backcountry
Park Maps
Press Releases
Road Conditions
Ranger Programs
What's Blooming?
Bird Sightings
Photo Gallery

...and more!

www.nps.gov/bibe

A. Baker